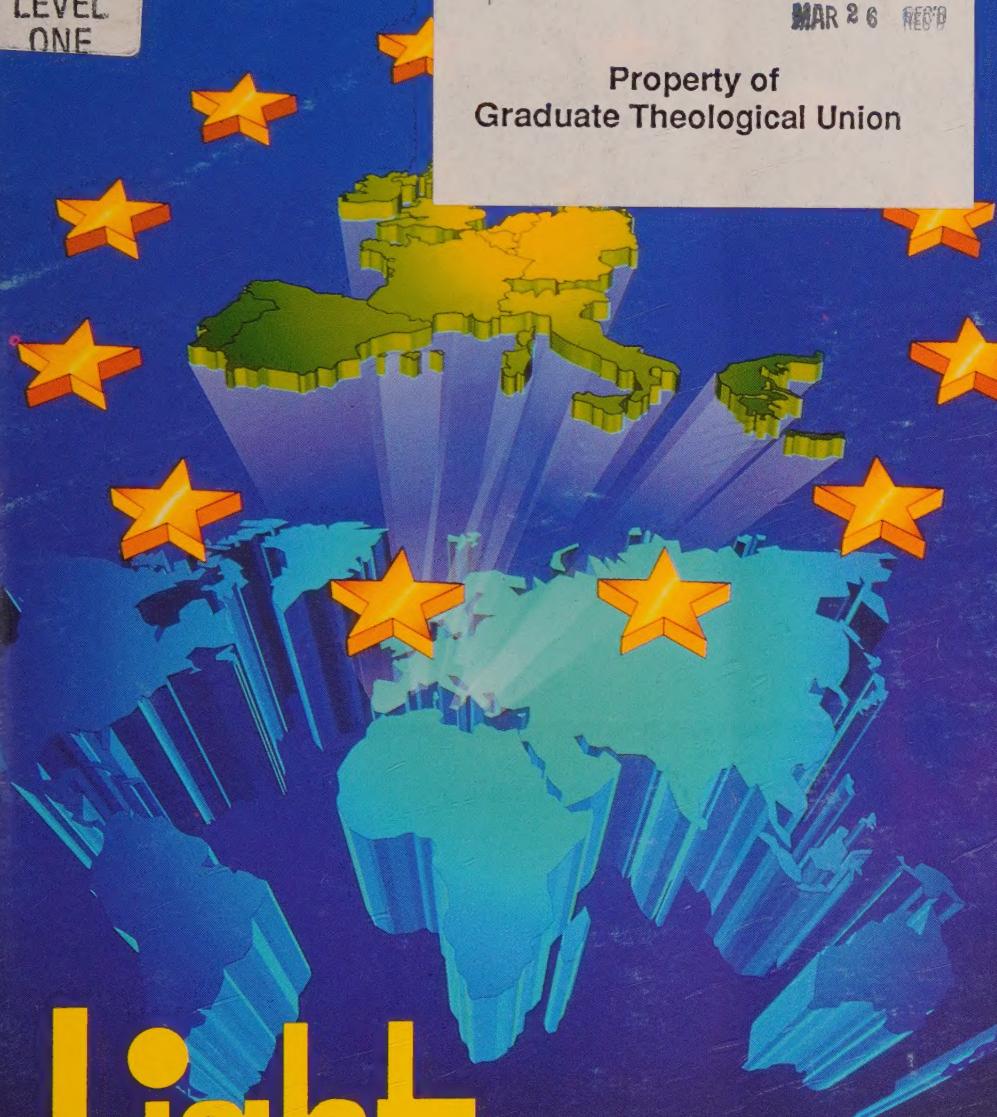


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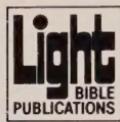
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Light... on a
New World

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Signs of

LIGHT . . .

on a new world

COVER PICTURE

The European nations that form the E.E.C. are shown in bold relief against the remaining nations of the world.

Geographically speaking, they are among the countries that are described in the prophecies as being of the 'North parts' or 'North quarters'.

They constitute the host that will be confederate with the Gogian 'King of the North' which are spoken of by the prophets concerning the 'last days'.

In the first article of this first issue for 1992 we examine the part that the Bible has recorded they will play in God's purpose.

It is interesting that the Logo that has become the international flag under which they are united, constitutes 12 golden stars. A 'sign' which the Scriptures use to identify an organisation that has powerfully influenced momentous events in world affairs since the time of Constantine.

Signs of the Times

COMMENTING UPON THE recent rioting in the United Kingdom, it was said by an observer of the carnage in that area, 'It's a SIGN of the TIMES!'.

The phrase aptly sums up what so many feel about the cause of these and other events — namely, that they are symptomatic of the age in which we live. The failure of so many small businesses in the United Kingdom is a sign of the difficult trading circumstances which prevail, when recession has hit consumer spending and the 'knock on' effect is felt by us all.

Indeed, a SIGN of the TIMES.

Jesus was particularly scathing of his generation who had asked Him for 'a sign from heaven'. We are not told why they asked for this sign, although the reply of Christ indicates that it might not have been asked in good faith, for he described them as hypocrites. The times then prevailing for the Jewish nation were difficult in so many respects. Because of disobedience to God's Law they had been invaded by a succession of nations, and in Christ's day, it was the Roman power who controlled everyday life in Israel.

Jesus said to the Pharisees and Sadducees:—

'When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the SIGNS OF THE TIMES?'¹

That there *were* signs in Christ's day of impending doom for the nation of Israel, is in no doubt. The Old Testament prophecies were clear for those who cared to study them; the Messiah would come and be rejected and wrath would then follow for the people of God. This, the leaders of Israel failed to recognise and they would pay a heavy price in the dispersion of Israel to the four corners of the earth.

¹Matthew 16.2,3

In this Issue of *LIGHT* on a New World, we begin 1992 with a review of some of the events of 1991, which, looked at from the point of view of God's message to man, are clearly telling US that Christ's Second Coming is very, very near. We are not told the day or the hour when Christ will return to the earth, but we **ARE** given signs — **SIGNS OF OUR TIMES** — which make it clear that we do not have long to wait and neither do we have much time left to prepare for His coming.

We hope that you will find the article **WHAT LIES AHEAD** a stimulant in your personal preparation.

The Editor

1991— What Lies Ahead?

DURING THE PAST year, we have probably all wondered just what state the world would be in by this time. Here we are in January 1992, and those events of just twelve months ago seem almost unreal. Did this country, America and a host of other nations really go to war? We live in a world of broadcasting, which almost reflects a television play or film in its presentation. So used are we to the actors getting up after being shot, the plywood and polystyrene tanks and guns being swept up into the corner after the camera has stopped turning, that as we watched the warfare being waged, it didn't seem real.

But it was. On 17th January the first aircraft pounded the Iraqi positions both in Iraq and Kuwait.

The world waited with bated breath. Would Israel as the avowed target of Saddam Hussein, be dragged into a Middle East conflict of horrendous proportions?

To many Bible students, these events signalled a degree of awesome apprehension. For centuries, the Scriptures had recorded those prophecies pertaining to '*the last days*' or '*the latter days*'. A time when the nation of Israel was to be the epicentre of a great new world conflict which would culminate in an astonishing climax. The appearing of their Messiah.

On the 18th January, the first missile attack against Israel was launched. Tel Aviv and Haifa were hit and on the following day, Israel warned of severe retaliation. Was this to be the trigger to Armageddon, many people asked.

Then, a surprise. Syria the long-standing opponent of Israel refused the Iraqi dictator's request to attack Israel and the world at large heaved a sigh of relief.

On 31st January, Saddam Hussein attacked Saudi Arabia on the ground. An Arab nation finally warring against Arab nation as the desperate balancing trick

between power and politics began to take shape. Had Hussein run out of patience? He had tried to evoke the hatred of the Jew by the Arab by appealing to them to wage a Jihad (Holy war) against Israel. He could not understand that his own strength, demonstrated in his rapid conquest of Kuwait, had been counter-productive. The Arabs fear of Hussein was greater than their opposition to the Jews.

The war was over. The coalition forces had by sheer technology and firepower, pummelled the Iraqi army into submission and the world breathed more easily. However, at what price had it avoided a Middle East disaster?

Israel had shown an uncharacteristic degree of restraint in following a policy of non-retaliation. It may not have been generally realized they had good reasons to bide their time.

In the December of 1990, Mr Baker the American Secretary of State had told Israel, that the Gulf crisis 'had merely postponed' America's determination to achieve a settlement of the Arab/Israel conflict. Even as we write, the first meeting in Madrid has taken place, with Mr Bush and Mr Gorbachev presiding over the opening ceremony.

During the outworking of the Gulf conflict, we witnessed other astounding events in the world's political scene. Whilst the Middle East had dominated the attention of the masses in the early quarter of the year, Europe had seen enormous changes in the power bases of the nations.

Following the re-unification of Germany, Eastern bloc countries were tumbling into democracy and the capitalist 'West' was dealing with a flood of immigrants. Suddenly, the cold war of decades was showing signs of a thaw. The transformation of Eastern Europe into the new order of things did not pass without bloodshed and even as we go to press, the carnage of Yugoslavia continues.

Meanwhile, in the African continent, freedom for the people took further small steps forward as the South African government gave more ground in the gradual relinquishing of Apartheid. The first recognition of this being by the re-entry into world sports of the South African cricket and rugby teams. It is now the task of many countries to remove the trade embargo which they have practised to try and bring pressure to bear upon South Africa.

THE NEW EUROPEAN ALLIANCES

The events of the Gulf conflict had resulted in America and Russia being joint architects of the Middle East peace initiative.

But what of Russia and the part that 'the bear' is to play in the final scene immediately prior to the arrival of the Messiah of Israel? Even now, the great giant of Communism, is gradually fragmenting into an association of States and is looking

toward a federal amalgamation. The Soviet Government rules impotently over the associated peoples of their former Union, with food and other basic essentials a luxury fewer and fewer can afford.

Conversely, the European association of member states, under the title of the E.E.C. and the Treaty of Rome seem to be gathering strength and momentum as they flex their political muscles in Brussels.

Two of the historic enemies in Europe who now play an active role in the European Community, brought a flurry of activity in October. France and Germany established a small token joint army brigade as an outward sign of their newfound relationship some four years ago in 1988. It is believed that Germany had never looked upon it as a fighting force of any calibre. However, President Mitterrand of France wants to see it vastly enlarged and under Western European Union command.

This has manifested itself despite the British government's assertion, that an enlarged joint Franco-German brigade could not easily perform alongside the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) forces. This despite the many references to the importance of co-operation with NATO by such a force. A force incidentally, which is mooted as having perhaps as many as 100,000 men. It is a stark contrast to the rather half-hearted support either given or offered by some European countries during the Gulf crisis.

This idea had not been well received by British politicians and there were many who openly considered it as a move to gain some political ground at the meeting of the E.E.C. in Maastricht last December. But it is becoming plain for all to see, that by the easing of the tensions in what was known as 'the cold war', Europe sees no role for America in this new era, and is even less prepared to accept the leadership which has been the American prerogative from the end of World War II.

THE INFLUENCE OF ROME

Meanwhile, another architect of the changes happening, not only in Europe but in other parts of the world, is the present Pope, John Paul II.

He was in Hungary at the time of the unsuccessful coup in Moscow against Mr Gorbachev, assisting the church to regain its confidence and power in that country. A power which had been very weak during Communist rule.

During the present Pope's period of office, the basic doctrines and dogma of the Roman church have become stronger than at any time over the past 30 years.

Whereas, the advent of Communism dissolved the strength of the predominantly Catholic Church, now, with the demise of the Communist style government, the Catholic Church is growing in strength.

Having lost its temporal power in 1666, the title of Holy Roman Empire survived until 1804 when the ideal that the only form of decent rule was a **universal empire** finally faded. It was, in fact, on the grounds that England was an Empire, that Henry VIII made the case against the then Pope, that political authority in England was absolute and was not subordinate to the Primate of the Church.

It is not without significance, that a highly politically motivated leader of the Roman Catholic Church has emerged at a time of such world wide changes in the order of things.

WHAT LIES AHEAD?

How then, are we to view the coming year of 1992 in the light of Biblical prophecy?

In an introduction to a report issued by the United Nations' Development Programme in 1990, the following was stated, '*We live in stirring times. An irresistible wave of human freedom is sweeping across many lands. Not only political systems but economic structures are beginning to change in countries where democratic forces had long been suppressed. People are beginning to take charge of their own destiny in these countries. Unnecessary state interventions are on the wane. These are all a reminder of the triumph of the human spirit.*'

The 'spirit' of man, is very different from the 'spirit' of God. In fact the opposite!

Experts continually tell us, that inherent 'good' is in every human being, and is waiting to burst through the wickedness exhibited and practised.

Whereas the Scriptures teach us that '*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,*'¹ and that 'good' has to be taught to us. It is then the hope that we may discern good from evil and practise it.

The Apostle Paul described the '**human spirit**' as, '*. . . the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*'² and the '*. . . mystery of iniquity*'³ which he attributed to the motivation of men who would be united against the establishment of the Divine order of things, which Jesus on his return to the earth, is to accomplish.

Therefore, as we look again at the overall world scene, we have on the one hand, the apparent scaling down of the military power of the U.S.S.R. and the Eastern Bloc countries fragmenting into independent States.

¹*Jeremiah 17.9* ²*Ephesians 2.2* ³*2 Thessalonians 2.7*

At the same time, we see the enlarging of the E.E.C. which is now embracing the former Eastern bloc countries, the endeavour of the more ambitious to form Europe into a Republic.

Great Britain, however, appears to be moving away from such a Union. The Gulf war had demonstrated that the bond between America and this country was still strong. The response had been swift, with a sizeable contribution of military hardware, together with a large percentage of Canada's armed forces, which did nothing to allay Europe's fear that the Anglo/American relationship was as strong as it had ever been.

So as the Franco/German dream of a Federal Europe emerges, together with the aspirations of an era of peace, it does so with the most political orientated Roman Pontiff in recent generations, waiting in the wings. Waiting to do what? . . . to realize the centuries old object of the re-establishment of the Holy Roman Empire.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE BIBLE

The Scriptures do not speak of an era of peaceful co-existence, with nations destroying their weapons. By contrast, they speak of the nations uniting for the very reverse.

The prophet Joel wrote, many centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, of the time when Israel should be gathered from among the Gentile nations into which they had been scattered by the Babylonians.

He terms them '*those days, and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem*' . . . a period when *all nations would come against Israel*.⁴

He continues:—

'Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say, "I am strong".'⁵

The prophet Ezekiel identified some of these nations when he wrote of the confederacy (Federation?) of nations that would come against Israel in the '*latter days*'. He spoke of the following in a very powerful prophecy to Israel, as he dwelt with them as a captive of the Babylonian Empire builder, Nebuchadnezzar:—

'Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him'.⁶

It is well documented by many independent scholars, that the word Rosh (pronounced Ros) strongly identifies with Russia, it being the name of many rivers in that area of the world. The other nations spoken of which are to accompany this Northern power have familiar names, some which have passed into disuse. Persia

⁴Joel 3.1 NKJ ⁵Joel 3.9,10 ⁶Ezekiel 38.2 NKJ

(Iran), Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer (Armenia) and ‘. . . the house of of Togarmah’⁷ which encompasses many nations of Europe, from people who over the centuries migrated northward.

The prophet records how they will ascend and invade southwards towards the Middle East, and we read:—

‘On that day it shall come to pass . . . and you will make an evil plan: You will say “I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates — to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against . . . a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods”’.⁸

The northern host are shown to be coming against a land once desolate, but now inhabited by a people regathered from many nations. A rich land enjoying wealth and prosperity, now dwelling in peace and safety. No walls, no bars, no gates, in other words, no defence against its immediate neighbours.

As we read on, it is obvious that the land spoken of is Israel. It is also obvious, that the time of peaceful co-existence exists. Could it be the result of the negotiations which began in Madrid?

The prophecy records:

‘. . . Thus says the Lord God: “On that day when my people of Israel dwell safely, will you not know it?”’⁹

Of course he (Gog, the prince of Rosh) may well know it, if he was one of the two principles who brought the peace conference into being! He also has an additional title given by Scripture in another place. Daniel recorded him as being the ‘King of the North’¹⁰ in relationship to Israel. There is also another titleholder, the ‘King of the South’,¹¹ spoken of in this chapter. Could this possibly be the other principle who worked for the peace conference, from the opposite side of the globe?

How the events we have seen occur over the past year, fit the scene portrayed by the Scriptures. The Europeans with the exception of Britain, trying to distance themselves from America, resulting in a greater leaning toward a united states of Europe. But now expanding its coverage to the former Eastern bloc with eager anticipation of the Russian states as well.

Surely we see the beginning of a new empire, a *Northern Empire*, with the motivation being applied by the same power that brought down the atheistic Communist regimes from within, the Roman Catholic church. Is it coincidence, that the symbolic woman of the book of Revelation, clothed with the sun, who brought forth a man child, has a crown on her head of 12 stars? The emblem that is seen everywhere as the flag of Europe, 12 stars on a blue background.¹²

⁷Ezekiel 38.6 NKJ ⁸Ezekiel 38.10-12 NKJ ⁹Ezekiel 38.14 NKJ ¹⁰Daniel 11.29 NKJ
¹¹Daniel 11.40 NKJ ¹²Revelation 12.1

The book of Revelation, relies upon its readers having a full understanding of the Old and New Testaments. Without this, the symbology which portrays the message is meaningless and devoid of understanding.

THE FINAL OUTCOME

Bible students for centuries, have noted the parallel between pagan Babylon and Papal Rome. This is seen in the rites, the dogma and tragically in the doctrines of this world wide organisation.

It will be interesting to watch the influence and direction that the Papacy brings to bear, by the use of the Treaty of Rome to mould the European dream. It is this Treaty, of which so many are ignorant, that will finally help shape the destiny of the nations of Europe.

But perhaps it will be because of the inability of the recently Communist countries to feed their people, that will drive the leaders to seek to unite their people by finding a common cause of indignation. Especially if the object of their wrath happens to be a prolific producer of cattle and goods and dwelling in comparative safety.

1992 is full of possibilities. European unity, peaceful co-existence with the Soviets, a solution to the Arab-Israeli situation, a Palestinian homeland, self rule for South Africa, a greater establishment of democracy throughout the third world, a stronger United Nations assembly, environmental awareness, an even distribution of the world's wealth and an accelerating embrace of 'christian' values?

As many might well say . . . 'wouldn't it be marvellous?!"

But a more sobering thought is to be understood, from a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the believers at Thessalonika. He knew that it was to be the great world wide *conflict* that was going to herald the return of the Messiah, not peaceful co-existence. His words come down to us today with as much force and emphasis as they did to those to whom he was writing.

This is what he wrote:—

'But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the *day of the Lord* so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say "*Peace and safety*" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labour pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this day should overtake you as a thief . . . Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober (watchful).'¹³

¹³1 Thessalonians 5. 1-6 NKJ

So we all have good reason to study the events that are going on around us. Many will say, 'there is nothing that we can do about it, so why worry about it'. Hopefully there may be others who will say 'Is there anything we can do about it?'

The answer is, yes you can. By resolving to start this new year by searching for the truth of the matter.

No better words can be found to show clearly why study needs to be done, than what the man Jesus told the religious leaders of his day, who did not believe that he was the promised Messiah.

He made the point that although they supposedly studied, they had not and could not recognise him.

These were his words:—

'You search the scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life these are they which *testify of me*'.¹⁴

May it be your blessing to be able to recognise Jesus, for the time of his coming is almost upon us.

Roy Hinkly
Orpington

¹⁴*John 5.39*

The Gospels — a Preliminary Note

THE WORD 'GOSPEL' means 'good news'. These four accounts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus tells us the good news of how God fulfilled His promise to bring into being one who would confirm the covenants He had made with the Jewish patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.¹ God had sworn to these faithful men that He would give both them and their descendants the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession;² also that through one particular descendant all nations would be blessed.³ Jesus was 'raised up' (ie begotten by the power of the Holy Spirit on Mary) to be God's one and only Son, His 'lamb' to take away the sins of the world.⁴ The 'new covenant' established by this sacrifice was thus an 'enabling' covenant, opening up the way to eternal life so that the promise of eternal inheritance (of the land) could be realised. Christ's victory over sin and the grave has paved the way for his return to the earth to reign supreme and, in particular, to implement these solemn promises to the patriarchs.

The value of several historical records to such an important stage in the development of the divine purpose can hardly be overstressed. The differences and variety in the four gospels — three of them written by eyewitnesses to the events and discourses they describe⁵ — demonstrate the independence of the writers, yet the 'undesigned coincidences' which careful study of them reveals, greatly enhance our confidence in their truth and reliability. The sheer volume of all four records put together (some 90 chapters) also testifies to the importance of the subject (this seems to be the rule throughout Scripture, where many chapters are devoted to other faithful men such as Moses, David, Hezekiah and the Apostle Paul, to name only a few).

It is only to be expected that in modern times critics and unbelievers have busied themselves accusing the gospel writers of inaccuracies and contradictions,⁶ and some have gone so far as to allege that these accounts are largely second century

¹*Romans 15.8* ²*Genesis 17.8, 26.3, 35.12* ³*Genesis 22.18, Galatians 3.8, 16-18 RV* ⁴*John 1.29* ⁵*Luke is the exception here* ⁶*Most of the alleged 'contradictions' melt away on careful examination; a few remain unexplained because the full circumstances are not known.*

inventions, the church of that era composing miracle stories and sayings of Jesus to suit what they imagined he must have said and done! Happily a contrary trend is also discernible, with some scholars proposing that the gospels were written within a few decades of the events they describe.⁷ We can therefore safely ignore the baying of the critics.

To sum up: the four gospels are Spirit-guided accounts of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The first three are often called the 'synoptic gospels' because, by and large, they describe the events from the same point of view. Nevertheless, each of them has its own distinctive features, some of which will be mentioned in due course. In fact, what is expressly stated concerning John's gospel is true of all four:

'And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.'⁸

Each gospel is, then, an inspired selection and arrangement of the words and actions of Jesus in their Palestinian setting in the first century AD.

⁷ J S T Robinson: 'Redating the New Testament' (SCM Press, 1976). ⁸ John 20.30,31.

The Gospel of Mark

DOCTOR LUKE, IN the preface of his gospel, refers to other evangelists as 'eye-witnesses' to Jesus' ministry.¹ Was Mark one of these? He could have been, especially if he were the young man who fled from Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested.² However, early chroniclers³ have testified that much of Mark's material came from the recollections of the apostle Peter who, in his first letter,⁴ refers to Mark as his 'son' (in the faith). There are a number of straws blowing in the same direction. For example: the period covered by Mark's gospel is precisely that named by Peter after Jesus' ascension to heaven. Judas had betrayed his Master and hanged himself. To restore the number of the apostles to twelve, a replacement was needed; in Peter's words:

'. . . beginning from the baptism of John, unto the day that he [Jesus] was received up from us, of these must one become a witness with us of his resurrection.'⁵

From John's baptism to Christ's ascension is the exact framework of Mark's record.⁶

But, interesting though these theories may be, they make no difference to what really matters, which is that *all* the New Testament writings are inspired, having been recorded by Spirit-gifted men, and their testimony confirmed by the apostles or by later elders who also were endowed with the Spirit.

PATTERNS IN THIS GOSPEL

At a first reading of Mark one might get the impression that the various events he relates are not set in any particular order, other than that of an approximately chronological sequence. There is, however, more in this than first meets the eye. If, for example, we take chapters four and five together, we find the following accounts:

first, four parables of the Word of God, either as seed sown or as a lamp lit;
next, Jesus calms a storm on the lake with a word of command;
and finally, the healing of a demon-possessed man, a woman with uterine bleeding and a dead girl.

¹Luke 1.2 ²Mark 14. 51,52 ³Papiqs, a second-century bishop; also Justin Martyr (AD 100-120) and Irenaeus (AD 177-202). ⁴1 Peter 5.13 ⁵Acts 1.22 (RV) ⁶Another 'straw' is the link between Mark 7.19 and the purpose of Peter's vision in Acts 10.9-16.

It is not difficult to recognise in these narratives an analogy with the progress of the gospel — how by preaching it the Word of Life germinates, takes root and multiplies; this is its present function in the world. Next, in a time of crisis,⁷ Jesus takes command and stills the angry nations.⁸ Lastly, with the Lord's return and the Kingdom of God established on earth, we have the healing of the nations — all ages blessed, whether men, women or children, and whether suffering from mental, physical or mortal diseases; and from all social classes (the demonised man was penniless, the woman had spent all her money on doctors, but in vain; the child belonged to a rich family).

If there is a temptation to dismiss this sequence as a coincidence, consider chapter six which immediately follows. The incidents related here are as follows: Jesus is rejected by his own people; the twelve apostles are sent out to preach the gospel of the Kingdom;⁹ John the Baptist is beheaded on Herod's orders; Jesus feeds the 5,000; there is another storm on the lake, again calmed by Jesus' intervention; and finally, every sick person brought to Jesus is healed. History and prophecy confirm the typical nature of this series too — Messiah's rejection by his own people, the '*good news*' preached but subject to persecution, then a multitude sustained by the bread of life, a stilling of the storm and, lastly, all people healed.

HEALING MIRACLES

Other patterns have been identified in this gospel, especially in the case of the miracles of healing which, though they differ from Matthew's series in the order in which they appear, still show (as in Matthew) a significant pattern and design.¹⁰

Mark's gospel is the shortest of the four (on account of which it is often the first book of the Bible to be translated for missionary use abroad). How is this brevity achieved? Mainly by omitting the long discourses of Jesus featured in the other gospels (the Olivet prophecy of chapter 13 is the one exception to this) together with the birth narratives and genealogies included in Matthew and Luke, also a number of the parables. It has been calculated that only some 66 verses of this gospel have no parallel in any of the other three. By contrast, most of the *miracles* recorded by Matthew and Luke also appear in Mark; there seems to be special emphasis on Jesus' *deeds*. In fact, the miracles do more than merely authenticate the genuineness of Jesus' teaching, important though that is; they themselves are demonstrably *acted parables*. When the Lord healed a blind or deaf person, it was also a testimony to all those present that he had received power and authority from his Father to cure their *spiritual* blindness or deafness.¹¹ Similarly with leprosy, paralysis and other physical or mental disorders, all of which have parallels in the moral sphere. Jesus' 'busyness' in these good works, and the apparent urgency with which he accomplished them

⁷cp Mark 13.24-26 ⁸cp Psalm 65.7 ⁹cp Luke 9.1-6 ¹⁰Austin Farrer: 'St Matthew and St Mark'; London: Dacre Press 1954 ¹¹cp Mark 4.11,12 and 8. 17,18 with Isaiah 6.9,10

(Mark frequently uses a Greek word variously translated 'immediately', 'straightaway' or 'at once') have suggested to many Bible students that we have in this gospel a special portrayal of God's 'servant' who was to come.

ONE PARABLE PECULIAR TO MARK . . .

There is one parable which appears only in Mark's gospel — the parable of 'the growing seed';¹² it replaces the parable of the tares in the sequence of Matthew's seven-fold parable,¹³ although there are, in fact, certain features the two have in common. In this parable the Kingdom of God is likened to grain growing steadily from its germination to harvest ripeness. Just how it does this is a mystery, but in the normal course of events the farmer reaps what 'nature' has provided with minimal attention. Jesus is telling us here how people of good and honest heart are continually being added to those who by obedience have made themselves heirs of the kingdom. One day (harvest-time) the wisdom of their obedience will suddenly become clear to the world at large. Until then, this 'election' by God goes on quite unnoticed by 'the man in the street'.

. . . AND PERHAPS ANOTHER?

Some Bible students see a second parable peculiar to 'Mark' in the reference in Mark 13.34 to the householder who assigns tasks to his servants while he himself is away on business (although this account closely parallels the story in Luke's gospel of the nobleman and his ten servants¹⁴). Mark's account includes this significant addition:

'He . . . tells the one at the door [AV 'porter'] to keep watch.'¹⁵

This is the antithesis of the other parable, in which the seed growth went on unattended. The lesson here is about *watchfulness*. In one sense every servant must be watchful,¹⁶ but clearly experienced elders in each assembly of God's people have a special responsibility to act as guardians of the flock and to direct their attention to the many 'signs of the times' which herald the imminence of the Lord's return.¹⁷ One cannot help marvelling at the state of most churches today, in which Christ's reappearance to become king of the world is virtually never mentioned — because it is not believed in spite of many assurances such as those which this thirteenth chapter expressly supplies!

JESUS' TRUE FAMILY

Mark's gospel is particularly helpful in explaining an incident earlier in Jesus' ministry, which on the surface appears as if the Lord was being impolite and dismissive to his mother. We are told that one day, while he was busy in a house teaching a crowd of people, his mother and brothers arrived outside and were asking to have a word

¹²Mark 4. 26-28 ¹³Matthew 13 ¹⁴Luke 19. 11-27 ¹⁵Mark 13.34 (NIV) ¹⁶Mark 13. 35-37 ¹⁷Mark 13. 24-30

with him. With apparent brusqueness he replied to those who had passed on this request: 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' adding, with a glance round at the rapt circle of listeners: *here they are!* — '**Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.**'¹⁸

What provoked Jesus to speak like this? Mark's account makes it clear¹⁹ that 'his friends [better, with AV margin, 'his kinsmen'] . . . went out to lay hold on him: for they said "He is beside himself"'. This was a totally inappropriate, indeed insulting, estimate of Jesus' teaching and behaviour. The connection between these verses and verses 31-35 is made even clearer in EV Rieu's translation: these relatives 'set out from home to take him into custody [v 21] . . . His mother and his brothers now arrived [v 31] . . .'. No family ties or obligations could justify such groundless interference. However, their error provoked a response from Jesus which has since formed a touchstone for every claimant who declares he belongs to Christ's family. He must ask himself 'am I doing God's will?' That 'will', which is a command, is:

'That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he [Jesus] gave us commandment.'²⁰

In biblical terms, to believe in *the name* of someone is to believe everything which is scriptually affirmed of him. Therefore the obligation of every Christian is to believe that Jesus is God's one and only Son, the Saviour of the world and its future judge and king.²¹ Denial of even a single item is to make God a liar, and this is inexcusable.

THE DISCERNING SCRIBE

We are also indebted to Mark for recording a somewhat surprising and heart-warming sequel to an incident briefly related in Matthew's gospel. According to the latter, the Pharisees through one of their lawyers tested (AV 'tempting') Jesus by asking him what was the first and greatest commandment.²² Mark adds²³ that this lawyer (whom Mark calls a scribe) recognised that Jesus had answered a previous question well. So, when he heard Jesus make the citation:

'Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.'²⁴

And the second is like, namely this,

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself . . .'²⁵

the scribe observed that these two commands were more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. Jesus perceived that this was a very discreet response and commented: '*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.*' It was a great leap

¹⁸Mark 3. 31-35 (NIV) ¹⁹Mark 3. 20,21 ²⁰I John 3. 23 ²¹I John 4. 14,15; John 5. 27; 19. 37

²²Matthew 22. 34-40 ²³Mark 12. 28-34 ²⁴cp Deuteronomy 6. 4,5 ²⁵cp Leviticus 19. 18.

forward for an orthodox Jew to acknowledge that loving God and one's neighbour meant much more than the ritual sacrifices offered under Moses' law (although the Old Testament prophets repeatedly stressed this fact); similarly, it takes a great deal for an orthodox Christian to recognise that Jesus' endorsement here of the unity of God, especially when taken in context, negates the whole concept of the trinity.

THE LAST TWELVE VERSES

Virtually all modern translations, from the Revised Version of 1881 onwards, note at Mark 16.9 that the last twelve verses of this gospel are missing in two of the earliest Greek manuscripts (Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus) as well as in many other manuscripts and versions. From these facts it has been concluded that the original ending was lost early on, and that verses 9-20 are a later attempt to complete this gospel.

At first glance the evidence in favour of this conclusion looks overwhelming. However, Dean Burgon, a Biblical scholar of the last century, made a meticulous examination of all the arguments against the authenticity of this passage in a book running to some 300 pages,²⁶ and he signally demolished them. His defence has never been successfully countered. Bible students have been grateful for this 'rehabilitation'; besides confirming the fuller accounts in Matthew, Luke and John of Jesus' post-resurrectional appearances to the disciples, Mark here records the Lord's direct command to them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, adding:

'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.'²⁷

So there are two essential steps for every would-be disciple of Christ to take. First, to *believe the gospel* (of the kingdom²⁸); secondly, to *be baptized* (by immersion in water) as a symbolic burial of one's old manner of life and a resurrection to '*newness of life*'.²⁹ The emphasis on the absolute necessity of belief should be noted — only hours earlier the Twelve had disbelieved Mary Magdalene's eye-witness account of the resurrected Jesus (verse 11) and had further dismissed the testimony of the two walking to Emmaus.³⁰ Doubting Thomas' took a further week to be convinced!³¹ No wonder Jesus '*upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart*' (verse 14). There will be no need for him to do the same to us if we accept the testimony of his inspired apostles and act on it by being baptized into his name.

J H Broughton
Asterley

²⁶J W Burgon: '*The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel according to St Mark vindicated against recent objectors and established*'. Oxford: Parker 1871 ²⁷Mark 16. 16 (RV) ²⁸Mark 1. 14,15
²⁹see Romans 6. 3-6 ³⁰Mark 16. 12,13 — cp Luke 24. 13 ff ³¹John 20. 26-29

BIBLE READING TABLES

		JANUARY			
1	Gen.	1, 2	Ps.	1, 2	Matt.
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27	Lev.	1, 2	...	102	10
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			...	104	12, 13

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